



FEMA

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## Montana Disaster and Emergency Services' Recovery Resources Symposium Draws Representatives from 130 Local, Tribal, State, and Federal Agencies

**Helena, Mont.** – Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (MT DES), supported by FEMA, hosted its first Recovery Resources Symposium drawing over 350 in person and virtual attendees to the event held at Fort Harrison, Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. Attendees represented over 130 different agencies including local, tribal, state, and federal partners.

According to event organizer, Sara Hartley, MT DES State Hazard Mitigation Officer, the Symposium was designed to inform attendees on resources available during disaster recovery, and the limitations of those resource programs; create partnerships among symposium attendees who may be able to assist in recovery efforts where other programs have limitations; and move forward as a collaborative group that can contribute to disaster recovery efforts while building a more resilient Montana. "Every program has limitations, so what we are trying to do is educate everyone to what various partners are available and what services they can provide to help fill the gaps in disaster recovery capacity."

Symposium presenters included Montana state emergency management experts, state higher education representatives, federal agency partners (such as FEMA, HUD, EDA, USDA, USACE, EPA, DOI), local community representatives, and philanthropic organizations who covered a wide range of community focused disaster recovery topics including infrastructure, economic and community development, housing, agriculture and environmental impacts, and local capacity and planning.

Montana's Lieutenant Governor, Kristen Juras and Montana's Adjutant General, Major General J. Peter Hronek provided opening remarks. Keynote speaker, Ashley Edwards, a leading voice on long-term disaster recovery in the United States, shared lessons learned from managing recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina.

Federal Coordinating Officer Maona Ngwira and Federal Disaster Recovery Officer Mark Shrives, also provided remarks regarding FEMA's efforts in the recovery phase of the flooding event last summer and what role the Interagency Recovery Coordination team would be playing in the long-term recovery.

Additionally, attendees were provided opportunities to network and participate in question-and-answer sessions during more focused, afternoon breakout sessions led by subject matter experts. Symposium attendee, Kyrsten Brinkley, Montana Healthcare Coalition Readiness and Response Coordinator for the Western Region remarked, “Outside of a great deal of new contacts and some fantastic resources, my biggest take away is that we need to encourage and incorporate recovery planning before an event occurs and remind our ESF-8 [Emergency Support Functions – Public Health and Medical Services] agencies that good recovery planning will lead to a smoother and easier recovery effort should the need arise.”

### **Next Steps for Recovery and Building a More Resilient Montana**

The symposium is the first step in building a long-term recovery foundation for the State of Montana which will include workgroups that can address disaster impacts to community sectors such as infrastructure, housing, economy, industry partners, natural resources, local capacity and planning. MT DES will work with symposium attendees, and others who express interest in supporting recovery and resiliency efforts, to develop a long-term recovery group that will include the above referenced workgroups. Follow-up collaboration meetings will be scheduled where participants can discuss and brainstorm how to participate and/or contribute to recovery and resiliency efforts during blue sky days and during disaster events.

To learn more about the Symposium and recovery resources, visit [montanarecoverysymposium.com](http://montanarecoverysymposium.com).